

MAJOR G. V. WHITE'S LETTER TO EDITOR OF OBSERVER

The following is a copy of a letter from Major G. V. White, M.P., to the editor of the Pembroke Observer, which was received at this office too late for publication in last week's issue of the Standard.

The object of publishing it at this late date is to correct any erroneous impressions our subscribers may have gathered from more or less questionable sources:

Pembroke, Aug. 22, 1916

To the Editor of the Pembroke "Observer."

Sir:—

In view of the fact that you have seen fit to mention my name several times in your issue of the 17th instant, in connection with the water situation at Petawawa, I desire to place the facts, regarding my position, before the citizens of Pembroke. I would, therefore, request you to kindly give this letter the same prominence which your articles of the 10th and 17th instants, dealing with conditions at Petawawa Camp, received.

Permit me to point out to you that you neglected to state, in your last issue, the primary reason why I objected to your article of the 11th. I informed you that you had, through the columns of your paper, created the impression that I had been approached with reference to the alleged present situation at Petawawa Camp, and that I was unable to get the Department of Militia at Ottawa to take any action towards remedying alleged conditions. I beg to state that upon one occasion only, a few years ago, was I requested to consult the Militia authorities at Ottawa with regard to the treatment of the sewage at Petawawa Camp in order to prevent any contamination of our water supply. At that time I discussed the question thoroughly with Colonel (now Surgeon-General) Carleton Jones, Director-General of Medical Services of Canada, and his assistant, Major (now Colonel) Drum. These officials informed me that the Department had installed a system of septic tanks and sand-filtration beds for the purpose of treating the sewage from the Camp; that this system was similar to that in use at the Military Camps in Great Britain and that it was considered most satisfactory. Under the circumstances, I felt satisfied that every precaution was being taken to prevent any pollution of the water.

With reference to the present situation, I informed you that I had been at home since July 20th, last, and that, if conditions were as serious at Petawawa as your article of the 10th instant would indicate, why had not the matter been brought to my attention instead of publishing it broadcast through the columns of your paper, thereby injuring the town and also the camp at Petawawa, and giving the Department of Militia ample justification for discontinuing the training of troops there. Because the authorities at Ottawa, having regard for the welfare of the citizens of Pembroke, would close the Camp, and would be justified in doing so, if they thought that the presence of troops there was a menace to the health of our citizens.

I believe I can say, without fear of contradiction, that no citizen of Pembroke is more desirous than I am of doing everything to preserve the health of the community. And, if I thought for a moment that the Petawawa Camp was a menace to the town from the standpoint of health, notwithstanding the benefit it is from a financial point of view, I would immediately go to Ottawa and do, all in my power, to have it abandoned as a training camp.

Let me point out that, for several years after Petawawa Camp was established, the Town of Pembroke did not derive much benefit from that source, as practically all supplies required were brought in from outside points, but of late years I have been endeavoring to secure as much business for Pembroke and the surrounding country, from the camp, as I possibly could, and I am quite sure that almost everything which is consumed there at present and which can be procured in this neighborhood is purchased through local dealers. From a financial standpoint the camp

is, therefore, a great benefit to the town.

Now what is the situation regarding sanitary conditions at Petawawa? After hearing considerable discussion on the street—bear in mind that no official of the town solicited my services regarding this matter—I phoned to Mr. F. B. McCurdy, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Militia, and informed him that there was some agitation here over what was claimed to be more or less unsanitary conditions at the camp, and I requested Mr. McCurdy to send a competent sanitary engineer to investigate conditions at Petawawa, and I would accompany him. Mr. McCurdy informed me that he would look into the situation at once and advise me later. I received a telegram from him the same evening informing me that the departmental engineers had advised him that the discharge water from the septic tanks was being chlorinated and that these tanks were in perfect condition. Being anxious, however, to probe the matter to the bottom, I immediately replied, insisting upon a competent sanitary engineer being sent at once.

The result was that I received a wire the following day—Saturday, August 12th—from Mr. McCurdy, stating that Dr. McCullough, Provincial Health Officer, had been instructed to proceed to Petawawa Camp and look over the situation there. I then got in touch with Dr. Sparling, Medical Health Officer, and Mr. Moore, Town Engineer, and, in company with them proceeded to Petawawa on the 12th instant. We called on Colonel Meredith and, in company with him, made an inspection of the septic tanks and filter beds. I am not in a position to state what conditions existed prior to that date; but I have this to say, that, so far as I was able to judge, everything possible was being done then to treat the sewage in order to prevent any contamination of the water.

I again visited the camp on the 14th instant in company with Dr. McCullough, Colonel Meredith, Major Harrison, A.A.G. of the Camp, and Major (Dr.) McCarthy, Camp Sanitary Officer, and found the sanitary conditions most satisfactory.

In conversation with the officials at Petawawa Camp, I learned that there are no cases of typhoid at the camp and that sickness is reduced to a minimum, which indicates that every precaution is being taken to make Petawawa an ideal camp in every respect.

What is the situation in Pembroke to-day regarding an epidemic of typhoid fever? I have it, on the best authority, that there are some seven or eight cases of typhoid here and that, of this number, not more than two or three cases are local, the remainder being from outside points. Is this an abnormal condition for a town of almost 8,000 population, and at this season of the year, and does it not compare very favorably with conditions in past years?

Does this look as though Petawawa was responsible for a threatened epidemic in Pembroke? If so, all I have to say is that, in your position as a Councillor of the Town of Pembroke and a member of the deputation which visited Petawawa some two months ago and found, as you allege, such serious conditions existing there at that time, you were derelict in your duty to the town in not bringing the matter to the attention of the public sooner.

In conclusion, I wish to point out that notwithstanding your insinuation to the contrary, I have the utmost desire to do what I can to preserve the health of the community and prevent any sort of epidemic. Furthermore, it has always been and always will be my desire to do everything in my power to further the best interests of my constituents.

Yours truly,
GERALD V. WHITE.

A White Elephant.

Not so long ago the big theatre on the west end of Main Street was considered "A White Elephant" by nearly everyone. The people had tried to make it go and failed in the attempt. To-day the Grand is THE SHOW HOUSE in town. "Give the people their money's worth and the people will become satisfied customers." It proved true with the Grand.